

CITY OF DOVER
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
SEPTEMBER 19, 2024

The Meeting of the City of Dover Historic District Commission was held on Thursday, September 19, 2024, at 3:30 PM as an In-Person meeting in the City Hall Council Chambers (anchor location) and virtually using the videoconferencing system Webex. With Chairman Czerwinski presiding, the other members present were Ms. Horsey, Mrs. Richardson, and Mrs. Mason.

Planning Office Staff members present were Mrs. Melson-Williams, Ms. Katherine Oehmke, and Mrs. Savage-Purnell.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mrs. Horsey moved for approval of the agenda as presented, seconded by Mrs. Richardson, and the vote was unanimously carried 4-0.

ADOPTION OF MINUTES OF THE REGULAR HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION MEETING OF JUNE 20, 2024

Mrs. Richardson moved for approval of the Meeting Minutes of June 20, 2024, seconded by Ms. Mason, and approved 4-0.

COMMUNICATIONS & REPORTS

Summary of Applications for 2023 and 2024

Mrs. Melson-Williams mentioned that the Commission reviewed a total of 5 applications in 2023. All of them are either complete or underway. With the Permit Referral that was reviewed for 153 S. Bradford Street, they were initially looking to demolish the second floor of that building. However, after meeting with you, they re-evaluated their options and brought forth a Permit to complete renovations and repairs of the masonry instead; thus, keeping the full building intact. The renovation work is underway. For 2024, as of today the Commission is reviewing their sixth application (HI-24-06). There are notably two requests for Demolition and then another request for Demolition of buildings in the Historic District. For the Demolition of the building at 120 South Governor's Avenue (the old Acme grocery store) that permit was issued and from conversations today, it appears that demolition activity is well underway at that location.

The other one of note, is a project for the Legislative Hall Parking Garage (HI-24-04) at 425 East Avenue that is beside the Del-One Federal Credit Union Building. The Historic District Commission reviewed that earlier this summer and provided a Recommendation on its Architectural Review Certification. That project and its Site Plan was at the City's Planning Commission earlier this week and the Planning Commission granted Conditional approval to the Site Plan along with final approval on the Architectural Review Certification for that project. They did not require any additional changes. They received a full report including your meeting minutes on your deliberations on that project specifically. I think the one concern you had was related to the screening of the portion of the project where there would be a generator in the future. For the screening of that wall and nearby fencing, they have made those updates to their Plan. They'll move through a review process to finalize that Plan before construction could commence there.

Mrs. Melson-Williams asked if there were any questions; there were none.

Summary of Architectural Review Certifications for 2024

Mrs. Melson-Williams stated that these are actions involving Permits that are basically in the Historic District. For the most part, that Permit activity has been eligible for a Staff review process. Or in some cases, if it was interior renovations, there is no requirement for Architectural Review Certification for interior work. In total through the end of August, there have been 23 Applications for Permits in the Historic District. The Historic District Commission was involved in some aspects of only two of those. We've seen a lot of Sign Permits in the Historic District most recently and that leads the way. There have been a number of Roof Permits which typically are not visible, a couple of Fence Permits as well as some building exterior improvements related to some kind of access situations for ramping systems and entry doors.

Mrs. Melson-Williams asked if there were any questions.

Chairman Czerwinski asked about the last entry Permit #24-1150 Sign Permit for 32 W. Loockerman Street that we reviewed. He recalled that was one on the building where we had stated that they could install their sign along the metal portion of the horizontal structure member of the building. Here it's showing that the Staff approval was given which revised (the sign) to a vertical format rather than horizontal. He asked if this could be explained.

Mrs. Melson-Williams replied with that the building we were looking at originally had a couple of different sign opportunities there. There was some window signage related to the barbershop and beauty salon. What came before the Commission originally was a rather large sign that was to be kind of high up on the glass wall. This is the building at 32 West Loockerman Street where they wanted to identify Fears Promotions. His offices were part of that building. In kind of reworking some of their signage plans, Fears Promotions turned into a much smaller sign that instead of going across the metal area was to be placed in a vertical orientation more at the pedestrian level. The size we felt was reasonable enough that we did not need to bring it back to you. There is also a boxing business that will be making use of a window sign opportunity at that same location; that's a related business. I think in the long run we ended up with a much smaller sign at that location for one of the ones that was brought before you.

Chairman Czerwinski asked if the sign runs along the corner of the building? Mrs. Melson-Williams replied, it does run along a corner of the building. It does not cross window space. It is a little bit wider metal already existing.

Chairman Czerwinski asked if there were any questions. There were none.

Department of Planning & Inspections Updates

Mrs. Melson-Williams noted that our office continues to be very busy with a variety of our Boards and Commissions meeting and just overall activity wise here in the City of Dover. I do have to share with you that this is the last meeting that you'll see Katherine at, as Katherine will be leaving the City of Dover next week. So, we will be down another Planner. We are actively working to fill our vacancies. However, there are a number throughout our Department as there are citywide. Certainly, if anyone has an indication or someone who may be interested in a City position,

certainly visit the City's website at www.cityofdover.com to see the openings across all departments.

SPECIAL RECOGNITION

Mrs. Melson-Williams mentioned as you know Mr. Jonathan Street was a member of the Historic District Commission. Due to changes in employment and where he currently resides, he had to step down from the Historic District Commission. As is tradition when a member of a Commission steps down for whatever reason, we do prepare a Resolution honoring their time of service with the Commission. At your indulgence, I will let you know that Mr. Street has joined us virtually today from somewhere in North Carolina. I'll read the Resolution into the record.

(See attached Resolution)

Ms. Horsey moved to approve the Resolution honoring services of Jonathan N.H Street to the Historic District Commission, seconded by Mrs. Richardson, and unanimously carried 4-0 of the members present.

Mr. Jonathan Street said good afternoon, everybody! I hope you're all doing well. I don't think I ever want to hear my name repeated that much in one paragraph ever again, but I hope you guys can hear me. Thank you very much. I didn't anticipate or expect this. I served to help the City, not necessarily for any recognition, but it was an absolute pleasure and hope you guys continue the mission.

Mrs. Melson-Williams, thank you Jonathan. I don't know if any of the Commission members would like to say anything at this point.

Chairman Czerwinski stated thanks a lot for your help with the Board. It's been a real honor serving with you and I wish you the best of luck in everything you do in your future. I will always be thinking of you.

Ms. Horsey, thank you. You brought in an element that maybe the rest of us do not have, and that's your engineering background. So, thank you. We miss you already. Mr. Street replied, I'm sure.

Ms. Mason noted Jonathan, I'm sorry I've missed you in the last few months, but I really enjoyed all your wisdom and knowledge while you were here. So, good luck with you.

Mr. Street replied, thank you Mary, I'm glad to see you're back. I'm glad you're on the mend. Ms. Mason said thank you, I am glad to be back.

Mrs. Richardson continued; I just want to thank you. I've always been very impressed with your knowledge and your addition to any conversation we were having. Although I haven't been on the Board very long, I'm just glad that I got to know you as a member.

Mr. Street answered well, thank you all very much. It's a little overwhelming. I didn't expect it.

Mrs. Melson-Williams concluded with thank you Jonathan for joining us. I'm sure you may have other tasks, but you are certainly welcome to continue listening in this afternoon as they continue their deliberations.

NEW APPLICATIONS

HI-24-06 Delaware Supreme Court Building Addition and Renovation at 55 The Green - Public Hearing and Review for Action on the Architectural Review Certification associated with the construction of a one-story addition and renovation to the Delaware Supreme Court Building with site improvements. The property is zoned IO (Institutional and Office Zone) and subject to the H (Historic District Zone) and the SWPOZ (Source Water Protection Overlay Zone). The property is located on the east side of The Green and to the east of South State Street. The owner of record is the State of Delaware. Address: 55 The Green. Tax Parcel: ED-05-077.09-05-32.00-000. Council District 4. *The project is also subject to review of Administrative Site Plan S-24-15.*

Ms. Katherine Oehmke gave a brief overview of the project. This is the Delaware Supreme Court Building addition. This property is owned by the State of Delaware, and it's located in the southeast corner of The Green. It is 3.92 acres and on that same parcel there are a few other buildings: one being the Old State House and then the Margaret M. O'Neill Building. The addition is 700 square feet, and it will be on the south side of the building. The property is zoned IO and subject to the Source Water Protection Overlay Zone inside the Historic District.

It is also part of the National Register of Historic Places in the Dover Green Historic District. I perused the Public Archives website and found some interesting pictures; so, I thought I'd show these along with the maps. This is a picture of what the building looked like in 1966.

This is the 1979 description from the National Register of Historic Places Application. It describes the many different renovations that have happened to the building over the years. I thought it was kind of funny how it mentions that the squaring off of the windows makes it look like a Severe Georgian style. We can see this location has changed a bit over the years. You can see on the right map in 1910, the buildings were connected to the Old State House. In 1919, the buildings were enlarged. You can see the building in 1926 was still connected. This is what it looks like in 2019, and you can see that the porch was removed and rounded off. Here is the Site Plan for this project Application, the renderings, and the pictures. For the proposed edition, this is the drawing that they have provided showing the side and front elevation. You can see that the windows are almost look exactly like the same windows that were on the building before.

Ms. Oehmke asked if the Commission members had any questions or comments. There was none.

Representative: Ms. Neeka Grove, RG Architects

Presentation

I am Neeka Grove from RG Architects. We were hired by the State to bring this chambers addition and the interior spaces of two accessible ADA restrooms, break area, work room, and changing area before you. The need was to expand and give them additional office space. For the exterior, we did look at making it a little slightly different than what we see for the 1968 arch

top windows. Just because it's another addition we want to describe it and make sure it's notable in some way. We looked at it and it was looking too similar to the original 1902 structure. I immediately went back to the 1968 structure as what was given as a precedent of then replicating too closely with new materials obviously. Two of the comments that were made were the window type and materials of the windows.

The windows are all wood on The Green including this building as well. With working from the State, you've seen that they would prefer a wood with the clad exterior. So, that's what we are proposing. The keystones are also mentioned and are a cast stone material. The brick will be matching the existing brick.

There will be a slight difference in the watertable that is currently marble on the structure now. We're proposing a molded brick watertable that would give a little bit of a difference. Then the existing windowsills look like they are marble, and they will be a pitched brick. I don't know if you can tell on our renderings, we are maintaining a piece of the existing 1968 addition where there's a little shadow line. You can see where that sort of projects a few inches and then you have the four arch windows. We don't cover up entirely that whole piece that has a foot and a half that's exposed. We were still giving that story that you can see. So, it's telling the story. We can see the building evolving and its dates, and that 1968 piece is still there, and the extension comes out just a few feet from it.

Ms. Grove asked if anyone had any questions.

Mrs. Robinson asked why didn't you continue the marble watermark (watertable) to tie in with the existing building? Responding, Ms. Grove stated that we certainly can, and it was considered. I sit on a Historic District Commission myself and I know by working with National Parks' Standards, we want to make things just slightly different so we're not completely replicating it. Then it becomes an issue when you're looking at the structure and you're trying to figure out how it's evolved. You know, it's years and gives its story. That's one of the reasons why we did a pitched sill and a molded brick watertable just to give it a little bit of a difference between what's there from the 1902 and what's done in 1968. You can then look at it and say, oh, this is different. It's a matter of trying to blend it but making it slightly different. Is marble what they want? That was just our reason to just to give it some minor definition of how it's structured. Does that make sense?

Ms. Grove asked if there were any other questions.

Ms. Horsey commented that being closely involved with this building for the last several decades, I know it inside and out and its history. I think this most recent addition is just right because it is distinctive in how you have laid it out. I do like that you picked up the curved elements of the windows. That brings a distinction of its own. It does have history with the building. This site has looked very different since 1912 when the State House was, you know, "Georgianized", so to speak, and the two mansions were torn down. I have no problem. The space is definitely native. It's chronic and overly crowded in that building, so I think the design works well. Ms. Grove said thank you, appreciate that.

Chairman Czerwinski agreed that he liked the respect towards the addition and keeping the same window shape and everything in the original. My question is this, this building is on the National Register of Historic Places, right? Did the State's Historic Preservation Office sign off on this addition yet?

Ms. Grove replied no, is that a requirement? Chairman Czerwinski replied you might want to check with them. It's a government building and having a State building you might have to go through the State Historic Preservation Office to get their approval with it being on the National Register of Historical Places. We can approve it, but make sure you check with them. Ms. Grove replied okay.

Chairman Czerwinski asked if there any other questions.

Chairman Czerwinski asked if there was anyone from the public that wishes to make a statement on this application.

The public hearing is open.

Mrs. Melson-Williams (the host) mentioned that the Chair is now opening the public hearing for those in the room. If you wish to speak, if you raise your hand and we'll ask that you move forward to the podium. If there's anyone here that wishes to speak.

Mrs. Melson-Williams mentioned that she believed she had several individuals online (participating virtually on Webex). I believe several of them are related to the project, as part of, of the ownership team, but I will see if any of them wish to speak.

Mr. Gavin Malone replied no, I am the site supervisor here at the Old State House. I was just actually joining the meeting simply to find out more details about the planned construction. So, I don't have any comments at this time.

Mrs. Melson-Williams thanked Mr. Malone for joining us to learn more about the project today.

I do see a Joanne Hastings and she had previously noted that she was listening in. I believe she is associated with the Court system.

And then I do see a login by Carlos Johnson, if you wish to speak regarding this application. I see that you're unmuted, but I'm not sure if you actually have a microphone that's working at the present time. If they wish to make a comment, they can type into the chat. They mentioned in the chat that they're sorry their mic isn't working, but they have no questions. Thank you for your time and support of this project.

Mrs. Melson-Williams mentioned that is the three individuals that have joined us online this afternoon; thank you for that. If you have additional questions, you can certainly reach out to the Planning Office. We're located here in the City Hall building or you can use our contact information that is part of the meeting agenda as posted on the City's website.

Chairman Czerwinski asked if anyone has anything they want to discuss about this project before we move forward with a motion?

The public hearing was closed seeing no one else to speak.

Ms. Horsey moved for approval of the Architectural Review Certification Application HI-24-06 for the Delaware Supreme Court Building addition and renovation to include Staff comments. It was seconded by Mrs. Richardson.

The vote was unanimously carried 4-0.

NEW BUSINESS

Review of Permits Referred to Commission

Mrs. Melson-Williams mentioned that there are no new Permits that we need to bring to you today.

OLD BUSINESS

Certified Local Government (CLG) Program

Mrs. Melson-Williams mentioned I believe there's still an opportunity that is open to us about that CLG Grant. Staff from the Historic Preservation Office did mention in an email earlier that they hope to be circling back with us regarding the grant opportunity. Staff will assess the capacity to be dealing with that. If you remember correctly, that was a process that we were looking to go out for consultant services to come up with some research and information on dealing with alternative and modern materials in the Historic District.

Implementation of 2019 Comprehensive Plan

Mrs. Melson-Williams mentioned that she did not have anything specifically for the Historic District Commission, today on that. I will note that in the Downtown, the Department of Water and Wastewater is continuing to plan for a major infrastructure project along the Lockerman Street corridor, as well as associated street improvements. The Downtown Dover Pathway Study was recently presented to Council by the MPO (Metropolitan Planning Organization). That gave some guidance on potential infrastructure improvements while they're digging for utilities that may alter the kind of the street section, if you will, of what is parking, travel lanes, and sidewalks in the block of Lockerman Street between State Street and Governors Avenue and towards the train station intersection. I'll bring you updates as that project moves forward.

Mr. Mason moved to adjourn the meeting seeing no other items of business, seconded by Mrs. Richardson, and unanimously carried 4-0 of the members present.

Meeting adjourned at 4:09 PM

Sincerely,

Maretta Savage-Purnell
Secretary